



LEVEL 1 - 23 OF 55 STORIES

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BODY:

If you congratulate yourself on staying healthy, you may think you're doing it all on

our own. Surprise-if you live in a metropolitan area, location can make as big a difference as your personal lifestyle. And since more and more of us are making our homes in cities, it's crucial that we know which ones are the healthiest.

To find out, we subjected the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas (from New York, with 18 million residents, to Jacksonville, Florida, with 722,000) to three tests. First, did the area encourage healthy behavior for example, by providing plenty of fitness opportunities or wellness-education programs? Second, were various health risks (such as skin cancer and traffic accidents) statistically low, compared to the national average? And third, did the city have easily accessible health care? We consulted such agencies as the Centers for Disease Control, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Census Bureau and various health organizations from the American Medical Association to Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights.

Our rating system awarded cities three or four points in each of four categories (a perfect score would be 15 points, but the standards were high: Even Richmond, above, our top-ranked city, scored only 9):

*HEALTHFUL HABITS. Who wants to be the only one in town who smokes, doesn't work out, or comes to work with a hangover? To measure the climate for healthy living, we looked at exercise opportunities, alcohol consumption levels, and anti-smoking laws.

*CLEAN AND GREEN. We compared the cities in terms of air quality (based on EPA clean air measurements and levels of ragweed pollen), water quality and access to recreational areas such as parks, beaches,

lakes, rivers and mountains.

*STAYING SAFE. Some disease risks seem to be linked to location: Melanoma (skin cancer), for example, is more common in Sunbelt states, while other cancer rates are higher in industrial areas.

The incidence of accidents and violent crimes also varies. We looked at death rates from traffic accidents as a measure of driving safety. And we determined the risk of violent crimes from the numbers of murders, rapes,

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armed robberies and assaults reported to the FBI Uniform Crime Statistics.

*IF YOU NEED HELP. It's easier to stay healthy if your community has good medical care. Since every city we looked at provides basic medical services, we used the number of hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants as a guide.

Our final analysis, however, was not just based on numbers. We "realitychecked" our results by talking to local health-care professionals and journalists. Their comments helped us pare down our list to the final 10.

As you can see, the results were close-and no city scored perfectly. Other cities are not necessarily unhealthy-in fact, some people with specific health concern might not find their best bets here. We tailored our criteria to the typical city-dwelling reader: A healthy woman who wants to stay that way.

For her-and for you-the best new places to live are on the following pages. R I C H M O N D

9 Points Ask a Richmonder what's special about

her city, and she'll probably tell you something about its place in history as the capital of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. But start looking at the present-day city on the James River and you'll find an outstanding example of a community that really cares about its citizens' good health.

To start with, Richmond serves as one of the South's leading medical centers. It's home to more than a dozen hospitals, as well as the Medical College of Virginia, the largest medical education and research facility in the state.

In addition, many residents can get more than people in other cities for their health-care dollar. In the early 1980s, the area witnessed a heavy influx of health maintenance organizations (HMOs). These are prepaid medical plans that offer complete health coverage (usually available through one's employer) for a set premium. Stiff competition among HMOs has kept their costs low for Richmonders. In addition, 30 of the city's largest employers have formed the Richmond Area Business Group on Health to monitor the effects of HMOs and look for ways to keep premiums low and improve benefits to those covered.

Richmond also scores high for clean air, low cancer rates-despite its location in tobacco-growing country-and a low incidence of crime. Its many parks and recreation areas are a bonanza for outdoor fitness enthusiasts. B O S T O N 7 POINTS

Health care in Boston is just a phone call away. The Mayor's Health Line links callers with a vast network of healthcare services, including two of the best hospitals to be found anywhere, Massachusetts General and Beth Israel.

But Bostonians work hard at staying out of the hospital-they keep active, whether by running in the Boston Marathon, sailing and rowing on the Charles River, or fishing and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean. Walking is also popular. Says Susan Brink, a health writer for the daily newspaper The Boston Herald, "Business, shopping and entertainment districts are compact, which creates wonderful walking conditions. People who don't get much other exercise keep moving." The city is also a center of the anti-smoking movement, housing the

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Massachusetts Group Against Smoking Pollution (GASP), a lobbying group that works with local boards of health to pass clean air ordinances. Nearby at Harvard is the Institute for the Study of Smoking Behavior and Policy.

And, yes, you can drink the water it's rated among the nation's best. H O N O L U L U

7 POINTS

A place with enough going for it to make almost any other city jealous, Honolulu also ranks as the country's capital of longevity. Data on the state of Hawaii-80 percent of whose residents live in the Honolulu metropolitan area-show an average lifespan of 77 years, compared to 73.9 nationally.

Part of the reason is the high proportion of residents of Asian ancestry, who have a comparatively high life expectancy anywhere in the U.S. However, Honolulu also seems to encourage good health. Of the 25 states surveyed for the Risk Factor Surveillance System by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta last year, Hawaii ranked lowest in the percentage of overweight residents, and highest in the proportion of those who exercise at least three times a week. So it's a good bet that any heavy, out-of-shape folks you see strolling on Waikiki Beach are tourists-not natives!

We hardly need mention that Honolulu is a water buffs paradise, but landlubbing exercisers flock there as well: The Honolulu Marathon had 9,000 participants last year, and The Runner magazine has ranked Honolulu one of the best cities for running due to its fabulous weather and varied terrain.

The city also has a low crime rate and relatively few traffic accidents. The average commuting time is 25 percent less than the national average, which can keep stress levels down.

M I L W A U K E E

7 POINTS

Try not to let the image of Milwaukee as the country's beer-producing capital dominate your impressions. Milwaukee has a long tradition of health-consciousness. It gained its reputation back in the 1870's, when local governments throughout Wisconsin became very involved in health care, health education and preventive medicine. In the 1920's and 1930's, Milwaukee regularly won high honors in national contests for the healthiest city.

Milwaukee is still a winner, and preventive health care is still one of the main reasons why. A city-financed program called Project Life and Health offers free health screenings and health risk assessments to low-income residents. The local health department is a national leader in the detection of hypertension; since 1974, it has provided, free blood-pressure screenings at sites, throughout the city.

Milwaukee is also one of nine cities in-

involved in a nationwide health risk appraisal program conducted by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in Washington, D.C. Participants, selected at random, get tips on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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All this and a low crime rate, too, makes Milwaukee a place where it's easy to practice healthful living. M I N N E A P O L I S

ST. PAUL 7 POINTS Health care is one of Minnesota's fastest

growing industries and residents of the Twin Cities are the lucky beneficiaries. The area has some of the best centers anywhere for heart research and treatment, including the University of Minnesota Hospitals and the Minneapolis Heart Clinic. It's also the home of the Melpomene Institute for Women's Health Research, which specializes in the health of physically active girls and women. In addition, the Mayo Clinic, a world-famous referral center, is only 80 miles away in Rochester.

Residents of Minneapolis-St. Paul can also benefit from landmark legislation promoting good health, as well as strong local health programs. A few examples:

*Last year, Minnesota be

came the first state to pass a law establishing a comprehensive system for mental health services.

*The state has committed itself to smoking prevention by using its cigarette tax to conduct smoking education programs in communities and schools. Minnesota's 1975 anti-smoking law, among the first in the nation, had "an incalculable impact on the fight for clean indoor air, and has raised the consciousness of Minnesotans about the negative effects of smoking," says Mark Pentschuk, executive director of Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights in Berkeley, California.

R O C H E S T E R 7 POINTS

Rochester, in upstate New York, is known for its cold, snowy winters, but it's also a thriving center for health care. The metropolitan area has more than 2,000 physicians and surgeons and nine hospitals, including Strong Memorial, rated one of the best in the country in a national survey of doctors. "The spirit of cooperation that exists among its hospitals has put Rochester on the map in terms of health care," says Donna Regenstreif, former executive vice president of the Rochester Area Hospitals Corporation.

Rochester's commitment to women's health is evident through the University of Rochester Cancer Center's Center for Early Breast Cancer Detection. According to assistant director of public relations Margaret Graham-Smith, the facility is the only one in the country to offer free mammography to all women.

A low crime rate and clean air also contribute to Rochester's high rating. In fact, a recent study by the Rochester-based Center for Governmental Research, comparing the city to 14 other urban areas of similar size, found Rochester's crime rate to be the lowest and rated it number one in overall quality of life. Rochester was also among the first cities in the country to conduct citywide screenings of cholesterol levels.

S C R A N T O N / W I L K E S - B A R R E

7 POINTS

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The Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area, located on the Susquehanna River in northeastern Pennsylvania, is not a particularly glamorous or cosmopolitan setting. But the two middle-sized cities are both neighborhood-oriented communities that can provide the setting for a balanced, healthy life, within a reasonable distance of the faster-paced East Coast metropolitan corridor. The area offers an alternative to the nearby fast-track cities of Philadelphia and New York. It's a place where "getting away from it all" can mean simply driving for 10 minutes out of the center of town into quiet and heavily wooded mountains.

The forested Allegheny Mountains rise on one side of the river valley, and the Poconos, with their dozens of lakes and resorts for fishing, hiking and other sports, are on the other. There are even two ski resorts located within 15 miles of Scranton's downtown center.

The decline of heavy industry in the area-though it has given rise to some economic problems-has significantly improved the region's air quality. Scranton also has one of the lowest crime rates in the nation, according to FBI reports. It has first-rate hospitals, and its health-care costs are well below the national average.

GREENSBORO

6 POINTS

The "Piedmont Triad" of Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point sprawls across the rolling hills of central North Carolina. According to John Herbers, a reporter for the New York Times who covers the Greensboro area, the three cities (of which Greensboro is the largest) form an ideal example of the new American metropolis: urban and rural areas in a band of low-density settlement.

The tri-city area was ranked as the nation's "most livable metropolitan area" in a study by geographer Robert M. Pierce, PhD, of the State University of New York at Cortland. The study included health care, recreation, transportation and climate. It compares favorably with large industrial cities with a low incidence of crime, and enjoys good, low-cost health care facilities and a high ratio of doctors to local inhabitants.

The progressive Guilford County Health Department was recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for two innovative programs. One promotes healthy environments in day-care facilities, and the other encourages self-sustaining wellness programs in local businesses. In addition, the National Association of Counties last year named two of their health department programs as winners of New County USA Achievement Awards. One, the Community Alternatives Program, provides long-term home health care to disabled people, and the other, the Cooperative Substance Abuse Program, addresses health problems related to aging and drug abuse. P

PITTSBURGH

6 POINTS Pittsburgh is perhaps the nation's greatest success story in the battle against environmental pollution. Fifty years ago, the city's steel mills and railroads emitted a dense pall of smoke that hung over its steep hills and valleys, and contaminants fouled the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers that run through the city. But since World War II the city's Democratic party

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machine and its Republican business communities have joined forces to clean up the area's air and water. Today despite January's water-supply threatening oil spill on the Monongahela River-Pittsburgh remains a model for other cities attempting to deal with the consequences of environmental waste.

The city also boasts terrific medical services, led by a distinguished medical school at the University of Pittsburgh. Steve Twedt, a medical writer for The Pittsburgh Press, notes, "Our medical care rates among the best." Magee Women's Hospital, for example, delivers more than 10,000 babies a year, making it one of the largest obstetrical hospitals in the country, and Presbyterian-University Hospital ranks among the world's best for the amount and variety of organ transplants performed there.

Last November, the city council jumped on the anti-smoking bandwagon by banning smoking in most enclosed indoor areas, and guaranteed smoke-free environments in all workplaces.

As for fitness opportunities, Pittsburgh must love runners, anyway: The Pittsburgh Marathon is one of the biggest in the country, and this May the city will serve as the site of the women's

Olympic marathon trials. S E A T T L E

6 POINTS

It's reassuring to live in Seattle. The city's emergency medical services are among the nation's best, which is reflected in the fact that its residents have one of the highest heart attack survival rates (20 percent, compared to less than 5 percent nationally). The Seattle Fire Department has been operating a mobile coronary care/intensive care unit since 1970 under a program known as Medic 1. Today, the department operates seven Medic I units, each equipped with medical and electronic life-support systems and run by a team of highly skilled paramedic technicians. Medic I was so successful that an additional program, Medic 11, was started in 1971. It offers residents Red Cross-certified training in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The training program has been so effective that an estimated 25 percent of Seattle residents now know CPR, which can be used to care for a heart attack victim before medical help arrives.

The city's health-consciousness has spread to the workplace as well. The Smoking Policy Institute, a national education and lobbying group, is based in Seattle, and has helped ban or limit smoking in many local companies.

Seattle also won points in our survey for its outdoor recreational opportunities. Although the city has among the country's highest number of cloudy or rainy days per year, residents still take advantage of the area's moderate climate and the vast natural playground provided by Puget Sound, and indulge in water sports galore.

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